

In the claims:

Claims 1-46 (cancelled)

47. (new) A combination packaging and structural system adapted to protect a product during shipment and to be formed into a structural unit, the combined packaging and structural system comprising:

a plurality of three-dimensional elements;

wherein each of the three-dimensional elements includes a cavity formed therein that is adapted to be removably mated to a portion of the product during shipment of the product;

wherein each of the three-dimensional elements includes an interlocking portion that is adapted to interlock with an interlocking portion of another three-dimensional element of the plurality of three-dimensional elements; and

wherein the plurality of three-dimensional units are adapted to be interlocked using their interlocking portions to form the structural unit.

48. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 47, wherein when the plurality of three-dimensional elements are removably mated to the product, a composite structure is formed that is adapted to fit within a shipping container.

49. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 48:

wherein the plurality of three-dimensional elements comprise six three-dimensional elements;

wherein the composite structure includes six corners; and

wherein each of the six three-dimensional elements corresponds to a respective corner of the six corners.

50. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 48:

wherein the plurality of three-dimensional elements comprise two three-dimensional elements; and

wherein each of the two three-dimensional elements corresponds to a respective half of the composite structure.

51. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 50, wherein respective cavities of the two three-dimensional elements are adapted to receive a respective side of the product.

52. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 47, wherein the interlocking portion comprises a tongue and groove structure formed in a surface of the three-dimensional element.

53. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 47, wherein the interlocking portion comprises a tongue and groove structure formed in a plurality of surfaces of the three-dimensional element.

54. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 47, wherein the plurality of three-dimensional elements are foam structures.

55. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 47, wherein the structural unit comprises a construction product.

56. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 47, wherein the structural unit comprises a flotation product.

57. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 47, wherein the structural unit comprises a portion of a wall form for pourable building material.

58. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 47, wherein each of the plurality of three-dimensional elements further comprises a connector opening adapted to receive a connector that permanently joins the plurality of three-dimensional elements.

59. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 47, wherein at least one of the plurality of three-dimensional elements further comprises a passage formed therein.

60. (new) A combination packaging and structural system adapted to protect a plurality of products during shipment and to be formed into a structural unit, the combined packaging and structural system comprising:

a plurality of three-dimensional elements;

wherein each of the three-dimensional elements includes a plurality of cavities, each cavity of the plurality of cavities adapted to be removably mated to a portion of a respective product of the plurality of products during shipment;

wherein each of the three-dimensional elements includes an interlocking portion, wherein the interlocking portion is adapted to interlock with an interlocking portion of another three-dimensional element of the plurality of three-dimensional elements; and

wherein the plurality of three-dimensional units are adapted to be interlocked using their interlocking portions to form the structural unit.

61. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 60, wherein when the plurality of three-dimensional elements are removably mated to the plurality of products, a composite structure is formed that is adapted to fit within a shipping container.

62. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 61:

wherein the plurality of three-dimensional elements comprise six three-dimensional elements;

wherein the composite structure includes six corners; and

wherein each of the six three-dimensional elements corresponds to a respective corner of the six corners.

63. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 61:

wherein the plurality of three-dimensional elements comprise two three-dimensional elements; and

wherein each of the two three-dimensional elements corresponds to a respective half of the composite structure.

a² 64. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 63, wherein each of the two three-dimensional elements includes a plurality of cavities adapted to receive a respective side of the product.

65. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 60, wherein the interlocking portion comprises a tongue and groove structure formed in a surface of the three-dimensional element.

66. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 60, wherein the interlocking portion comprises a tongue and groove structure formed in a plurality of surfaces of the three-dimensional element.

67. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 60, wherein the plurality of three-dimensional elements are foam structures.

68. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 60, wherein the structural unit comprises a construction product.

69. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 60, wherein the structural unit comprises a flotation product.

70. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 60, wherein the structural unit comprises a portion of a wall form for pourable building material.

71. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 60, wherein each of the plurality of three-dimensional elements further comprises a connector opening adapted to receive a connector that permanently joins the plurality of three-dimensional elements.

72. (new) The combination packaging and structural system of claim 60, wherein at least one of the plurality of three-dimensional elements further comprises a passage formed therein.

REMARKS

In the Office Action, the Examiner rejected claims 1-5, 9-35, and 37-46 under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being unpatentable over Bussey, Jr. et al. (U.S. Patent No. 5,766,771). The Examiner also rejected claims 6-8 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bussey, Jr. in view of Vilas-Boas (U.S. Patent No. 5,060,801). The Examiner further rejected claim 36 under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Bussey, Jr. in view of Fiechtl (U.S. Patent No.